

# Behind the Rocks

## Findings

INVENTORY UNIT ACRES		
Federal	State	Total
<b>With Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
3,400	500	3,900 (45%)
<b>Without Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
4,400	500	4,900 (55%)
<b>Inventory Unit Total</b>		
7,800	1,000	8,800
<b>Contiguous Area-Wilderness Characteristics</b>		
Behind the Rocks WSA (UT-060-140A)		12,635

About 4,900 acres of the two Behind the Rocks inventory units lack wilderness characteristics, while approximately 3,900 acres do have wilderness characteristics based on their roadless nature and natural appearance. The portions with wilderness characteristics enhance the contiguous Behind the Rocks Wilderness Study Area (WSA).

Numerous connecting seismic lines, other oil and gas exploration impacts, recreational impacts, and roads dominate the portions of the units found not to have wilderness characteristics. Recreational impacts, in particular, have intensified over the last decade. Instead of being reclaimed naturally, these impacts remain substantially noticeable, primarily because of high use levels from the nearby community of Moab.

## Unit Description

The Behind the Rocks inventory units are located in San Juan and Grand Counties less than a mile west of Moab. The Behind the Rocks WSA separates the inventory units into two units, one on the east and one on the west side of the WSA. The western unit (Unit 1) is adjacent to the Hunter Canyon inventory unit, separated by a road. The topography of the western unit consists of large red-rock fins, domes, and knobs cut by several sandy drainages flowing into Hunter Canyon. Vegetation in the western unit is primarily piñon and juniper, with scattered brush-dominated parks. The topography of the eastern unit (Unit 2) consists of a dramatic 1,000-foot red-rock cliff that also forms a scenic backdrop for Moab. Vegetation in the eastern unit is sparse, consisting of a few isolated brush and weed plants. Current uses include substantial jeep and mountain bike use, some all-terrain vehicle and motorcycle use, day hiking, and livestock grazing in the western unit. The eastern unit contains the popular Moab Rim and Hidden Valley trails, which are easily accessible from Moab.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### Naturalness

Portions of the inventory units retain their natural character. The areas with natural character are extremely rugged, consisting of a 1,000-foot vertical cliff above Moab and the upper portion of Hunters Canyon. These areas are inaccessible to four-wheeled vehicles and, in many cases, also to mountain bikes. The area without natural character is dominated by a large number of interconnected, substantially noticeable seismic lines, constructed drill pads, roads, and vehicle ways.

Most of the eastern unit is natural, being a continuous, unscarred vertical cliff-face. One small area within the eastern unit, however, does not have wilderness characteristics; it is cut off from the rest of the unit by a road and from the WSA by another road. This area contains a large number of vehicle and mountain bike "play areas," as well as shortcuts between the two roads. Most of the western unit does not have wilderness characteristics because of the previously noted high density of seismic lines, constructed drill pads, roads, and vehicle ways, many of which interconnect.

## Outstanding Opportunities

### Solitude

The inventory units are contiguous to and are an extension of the Behind the

Rocks WSA. The two inventory units have outstanding opportunities for solitude when considered in conjunction with the WSA.

### Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Portions of the inventory units provide outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation that complement and are a logical continuation of similar opportunities available in the contiguous WSA. There are opportunities for cross-country hiking, geologic and cultural sightseeing, and photography. In addition, the units provide opportunities for rock scrambling and climbing within walking distance of the community of Moab. The units contain the popular Moab Rim and Hidden Valley trails, which access the contiguous WSA.

In the eastern unit, the Hidden Valley and Moab Rim trails provide foot access through the only practical slots along a continuous 1,000-foot cliff face. Ambitious and skilled individuals can scramble off the trail to reach isolated scenic viewpoints and rock art panels. The western unit contains extensions of the same types of tall, narrow fins located within the WSA. These fins form isolated and interconnecting passageways that create interesting off-trail travel routes.

## Supplemental Values

The inventory units have spectacular scenic viewpoints overlooking the Colorado River, from which surrounding geographic features such as the La Sal Mountains and Arches and Canyonlands National Parks can be seen. The units'

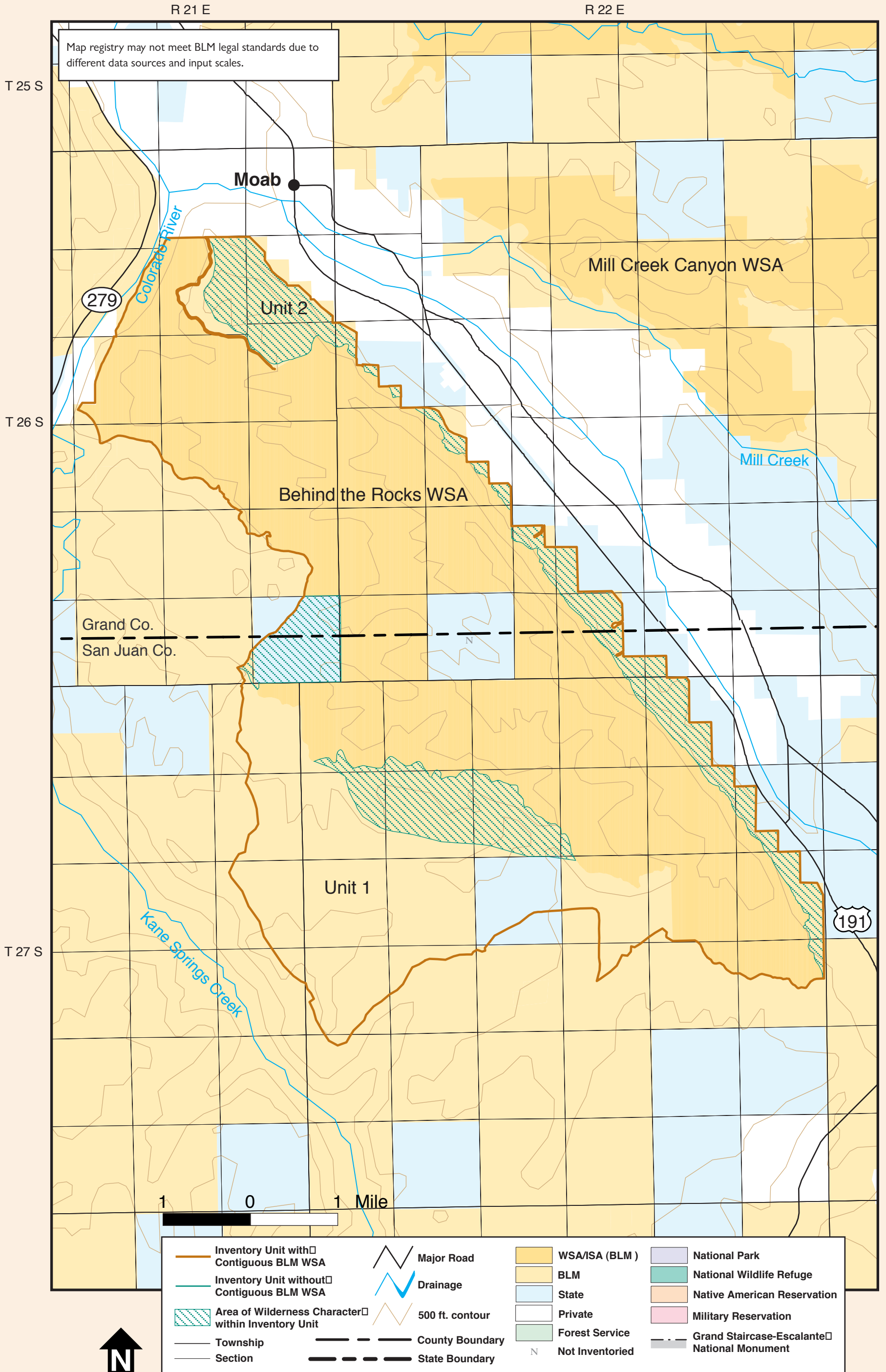
scenic cliffs form the backdrop to the community of Moab. The units also contain large arches, alcoves, spectacular rock-art panels, and paleontologic resources.



BEHIND THE ROCKS—The inventory unit and contiguous Behind The Rocks WSA contain numerous sandstone arches, alcoves, and spectacular rock-art panels to explore and photograph.

Eric Finstick

# Behind the Rocks



SOUTHEAST REGION—Behind the Rocks